

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

COUNTRY	USSR (Latvian SSR)	REPORT NO.	<input type="text"/> 25X1A
SUBJECT	Conditions in Ezere, Saldus, Ruba, and Lepaya	DATE DISTR.	14 August 1953
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THE SOURCE EVALUATIONS IN THIS REPORT ARE DEFINITIVE.
THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

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SOURCE:

1. In Ezere (N56-24, E22-22) there was no war damage. The airfield adjoining the big park was in operation for military purposes. There were new signposts on the crossings, with the larger villages such as Nigrande (N56-30, E22-05), Mazeikiai, and even Renge (N56-23, E22-37) in both Latvian and Russian. There is a dairy in Ezere for the entire vicinity, including Amberge (N56-27, E22-22). There was no cheese dairy in Amberge, though there was one there before the war. The millwheels in Ezere and Zana were in operation. There was an MTS located in the former stables of the Ezeres farm. In the vicinity there were, however, no more MZIP for lending horse-driven machinery. There were wolves in the vicinity; first rumors were spread that there were many wolves in Nigrande and Nikrace (N56-32, E21-57), especially along the Skervele River, but in 1950 there were wolves everywhere, even in Ezere, and when driving his team to Mazeikiai or Renge source always met wolves, usually four at a time. The whole vicinity was scared and the authorities announced that a reward would be paid for each wolf shot; however, there were so many wolves and so many were shot that the authorities ceased paying the promised reward.

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Article	Unit	Price (in rubles)
Sugar (usually not available)	kg	35 rb
Brandy, snable	1/2 liter	23 rb
Bread	kg	1.45
Bacon, in winter	kg	35 rb
Bacon, in summer	kg	85 rb
Kerosene	liter	1.40 to 2.00

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(Note: Washington Distribution Indicated By "X"; Field Distribution By "#".)

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<u>Article</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Price (in rubles)</u>
Work shoes	pair	1.40 rb
Work trousers	pair	80 rb
Overcoat, poor quality	1	400 to 500 rb
Man's suit	1	1000 rb

3. In the kolkhoz it was customary that each family having someone among them having a birthday or other significant day such as a name day arranged a festival, and the other kolkhozniki came to offer congratulations and to celebrate. If somebody could not afford much, at least beer was brewed. There was a festival celebrating the confirmation of the daughter of a farmer at Whitsuntide 1950. He invited many guests and there was even a sort of dinner, because this farmer had already delivered his norm of meat to the State and was allowed to slaughter a calf for himself. Beer was brewed from sugar beets, which was officially sanctioned, and, in addition, the farmer had brewed liquor secretly in the woods, from rye. Cookies, a pie, and a special bread called speka rauši were baked. The number of guests was about 25, mostly youth. Two of the boys had accordions and dancing lasted until late in the night. Source often heard people say that formerly at occasions like this the festival lasted several days. Dancing was arranged by the kolkhoz at the Amberge center during the anniversary of the October Revolution, November 7. Then musicians came from Saldus (N56-40, E22-29). On this day the beer was made by the kolkhoz and distributed among the kolkhozniki.
4. Deportations were carried out in 1948 but source does not know the particulars. A large-scale deportation occurred in March 1949 when 200 to 300 trucks were engaged in Ezere for the transportation of deportees. In 1950 there was individual rather than mass deportation; the deportation of families was not carried out simultaneously but always one family at a time, and the next one after a couple of weeks. Particularly, source remembers the following deportations: The former owner of Amberge and his family were deported shortly after the war; when source arrived in Amberge/Ezere, he had already been deported and source was told that a former farmhand of Amberge had taken to his home most of the personal belongings of the family, since his apartment in the kolkhoz was crowded with fine furniture and other valuable things formerly the property of the family. Most of the "old-time farmers" were deported, and even some of those who became owners of small farms after the liberation. Besides the family mentioned, many others were deported from Ezere and Nigrande. A former wealthy farmer from Dreimani (N56-39, E27-17) was scheduled for deportation, too, but his son, who was a Communist and chairman of the Padomju Druva kolkhoz, saw to it that his father was not deported.
5. In March 1949 hundreds of trucks arrived in Amberge, center of the kolkhoz, with NKVD men and sailors as guards. All the wealthy farmers in the neighborhood were assembled and transported to a station, but source does not remember which one. Source heard afterwards that one of the deportees wrote a letter saying that they had arrived in an area in Siberia where only wheat was raised, and the housing situation was very poor. Nothing was written about work or wages. The families assembled for deportation were allowed to take with them food for three days and the clothing they had on. One couple had a son who had been in the Latvian Legion, who after capitulation had joined the NKVD to save his hide and escape imprisonment in Siberia. He was serving with the NKVD in Lepaya, and remained there when his parents were deported from Amberge.
6. The Luthern church in the country near Ezere was open, and source had not heard of closed churches. It was not advisable to attend services, however, because those attending were regarded as unreliable. During the divine service at Whitsuntide 1950, the church was crowded, because many girls were to be confirmed. All kolkhozniki were in the church then, even the Communist Youth. It was striking, however, that, while 12 girls were confirmed, there were no boys. All the girls carried flowers and the ceremony was, according to the indigenous people, quite like those held before the Communist occupation. Only two or three of the girls had white robes, others having what parents were able to afford.

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7. The kolkhozniki were not allowed to observe all Sundays and had days off only on some Sundays during the winter. The official holidays when nobody worked, except for necessary chores, were New Year's Day, May 1st, St. John's Day, and Revolution Festival, November 7. On these days there was a meeting in the kolkhoz center. The chairman gave a speech, and sometimes an agitator from the Communist Party rayon office in Saldus came for this purpose. In the evening of the Revolution Festival there was dancing. In addition to these, source remembers the following holidays on which everybody worked, but during the noon pause were addressed by the chairman or party agitator: Stalin's birthday, Army and Navy Day, The International Day of Communist Women, The Day of the Paris Commune, The Day of the Bolshevik Press, All-Union Railroad Workers' Day, The Day of the USSR Navy, and the Day of Physical Culture, when there were sport competitions in Saldus. The church holidays, such as Christmas, etc., were not regarded as official holidays, and everybody had to work. However, some were celebrated unofficially.

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9. The most common newspaper was Cina, which cost 20 kopeks at a newstand, but was cheaper by subscription. The accountant of the kolkhoz subscribed to Cina and also to a kolkhoz magazine Ezere Arajs. The Ploughman of Ezere; the cost of the latter is not known. There was no advertising section in Cina.
10. Some of the kolkhozniki had radio sets, but these were either purchased a long time ago, or were German army sets. A kolkhoznik cannot afford to buy a radio set now because of the expense. There was no electricity in the kolkhoz, so the radios operated by batteries. It is not advisable to listen to foreign broadcasts, but whether or not there were official regulations forbidding it source does not know.
11. There was no bus line connecting Ezere with any other place. The nearest railroad stations were Mazeikiai and Renge. Before the war all traffic went to Renge, since Mazeikiai was in Lithuania, but now Mazeikiai is used even more than Renge. The carloads of sugar beets and sometimes of grain went to Renge, but for passenger travel Mazeikiai was nearer. There was a train from Mazeikiai to Lepaya at 0100 every other day, but from Mazeikiai to Riga there was a train every day at about 1000, because there was only local traffic to Lepaya while there was a through train from Kaliningrad to Riga. A railway ticket from Lepaya to Mazeikiai cost 35 or 40 rubles. All kolkhoz transportation was done by horse teams. These horses were Siberian horses received by the kolkhoz to replace horses taken from the kolkhoz for the army. The small Siberian horses had the advantage of not being afraid of wolves or gunfire. One seldom saw a car or motorbike on the roads; except for horsecarts, there were only trucks from the MTS. Even bicycles were a rarity. On the big roads such as Ezere - Mazeikiai or Ezere - Renge one could see patrols consisting of three men wearing a red ribbon around one arm. Sometimes the patrols were riding in a jeep, with an officer in addition to three men. Whether the patrols were from the airfield in Ezere or from other garrisons, source does not know. The patrols appeared on the roads in 1950-51 and were not seen on the roads before.
12. There was an airfield in Ezere which was in operation after source arrived ☐ The airfield was built before and was used for fighter planes. Source's guess is that there were about 40 planes located on this airfield. The airfield was adjacent to the big park at Ezere, west of it. The soldiers were billeted

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in the buildings of the former Ezeres farm but they were not seen around much. Source has heard that there was another airfield at Vainode (N56-26, E21-52).

13. All boys above 18 years of age were subject to military service, though source does not know particulars about the draft.
14. Besides the army and militiamen, the following civilians are reported to be in possession of weapons and ammunition:
 - a. Istrebiteli, civilian auxiliaries, were used by the MVD for action against partisans, etc., when necessary. These usually had German model 98 rifles, and ammunition.
 - b. Communist Youth participated in military training and also had German 98 rifles, with ammunition. Source is not certain whether they had the arms constantly or had them issued for certain occasions, such as shooting competitions and training or actions against partisans. In the Padomju Druva kolkhoz, on May 1 or other Communist holidays, the Communist authorities feared riotings and demonstrations, and therefore on those days the Communist Youth and Istrebiteli were also issued machine guns and hand grenades. As a matter of fact, such demonstrations and riots never occurred and were hardly practical even if no additional armament had been issued. The chairman of the kolkhoz Padomju Druva had in his apartment an arsenal of arms and ammunition such as hand grenades, machine guns, and small machine pistols. He was the man who issued the arms and ammo, which were returned to him. He kept all the military equipment on the Egleni farm. From there he received the arms and ammunition; to whom he was responsible, source does not know. It is believed that there was no thorough accounting of the ammunition used.
15. Foresters were in possession of hunting guns; it was also possible for other citizens to obtain a permit to buy a gun for hunting, but source did not know an average kolkhoznik who could afford one. Source was a driver for the kolkhoz in the summer of 1950. Since while driving one usually encountered wolves in the vicinity, and it was dangerous to be defenseless, source was issued in 1950 a small machine pistol of Soviet make with about 72 rounds in the magazine. This weapon was issued by the chairman of the kolkhoz from his arsenal, with one magazine of ammunition. Source was responsible to the chairman and was instructed to have the machine pistol constantly on his shoulder; he was not allowed to put it aside even for a moment. Persons in the administration of the kolkhoz, whom source took to the station or elsewhere, had pistols, though they did not use them when wolves attacked the horse cart.
16.
17. A Latvian man living in Amberge, a rural community in southern Kurzeme, told source that in the summer of 1949 or 1950 he saw 8 armed men marching along the road, carrying machine pistols. The man's opinion was that they were partisans. Source was told by other people that, in Lithuania, not far from the Latvian border, in the neighborhood of Mazeikiai, a woman was visiting houses inhabited by known Communists and Istrebiteli. This woman was carrying a live hen under her arm and was, or pretended to be, mentally unbalanced. The striking thing was that in the night, after the visit of this crazy woman, partisans raided these Communist houses and robbed the inhabitants of arms and food. This also was in 1949 or 1950. In 1949, source was told that one night partisans came to the town of Saldus and were taken by surprise by the militia forces in a house. There was a fight, with machine guns and hand grenades

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used, and the house was burned down. Source saw two burned houses and bullet marks in adjacent houses in Saldus in summer 1949. There were robberies in Ezere from time to time and partisans were officially blamed, but people rumored that militia-men committed the robberies themselves. When collectivization started in spring 1949, three sons and a daughter of a farmer fled to the woods, but the farmer was arrested and forced to name their hiding place. The forest was combed and their bunker was found. There was shooting, and the three sons escaped, but the daughter was wounded and captured. She died in the hospital in Saldus a couple of days later. After this incident the sons were joined by a young man who lived in the area around Saldus. He was supposed to be drafted into the Soviet army and did not want to serve. The sons were caught a couple of months later, in early fall, during a hunt arranged for the local Communist authorities and militia. Some officers from the NKVD also participated. They were led by a forester who knew where the bunker of these partisans was, and had supported them with food. When said hunting party approached the hiding place, the forester tried to persuade the hunters to change the direction, claiming that there would be no good hunt in this part of the wood. The NKVD people became suspicious and demanded that the same direction be taken. So they came to the hiding place and took the three sons by surprise. These defended themselves as long as they had ammunition, and two of the militiamen were wounded. After the ammunition was gone, the sons surrendered. They and the forester were severely beaten on the spot and then brought to Saldus to the prison. The draft-dodger was not present, due to the fact that he was visiting his fiancée. It was found out later, and six months after the arrest of the sons the other man was arrested in the house of his fiancée. Source heard that among the partisans in Lithuania there were also Germans, soldiers, and officers not willing to surrender after 8 May 1945, and also German tramps who came into Lithuania from East Prussia in 1947.

18. Source had seen only the main road in Saldus, coming in from Ezere, and the vicinity of the militia house. He does not remember the name of the street where the militia was located, but the street had the name of a Soviet town. There was little war damage in Saldus, and damaged houses were not repaired, except the militia house and some other houses where there were offices.
19. The kolkhoz Padomju Druva delivered sugar beets and, sometimes, grain to Renge station, which was in the rural community Ruba (N56-24, E21-39). The name of the station had not been changed and the station was still called Renge. The station had not been destroyed, nor had the railroad bridge across the Vadakste River. The nearby Lithuanian village of Laizuva was heavily damaged. In Renge, there was a new station building as well as the old, small one, the latter used for luggage operations. The Renge-Ezere road was paved for a couple of kilometers from the station with round stones, and therefore the horse teams sometimes used a side road leading through the former distillery at Renge. This distillery was in operation. The big barns of Renges farm were still there, undamaged. Also the windmill of Renge could be seen, undamaged, and wings turning. In the Renge castle there was an institution for the insane which was formerly a school for retarded children. Along the Renge-Ezere road source did not notice war damages except for the church of Ruba, which was heavily damaged and not repaired, and a house on the hill near Rozas School. The school building was not damaged. The church of Grivaisi (N56-26, E22-26) was damaged, too, but the parish repaired it shortly after the war.
20. The militia in Lepaya was in the MVD house, called by the population Zilais Brinums.¹ The ground floor was occupied by militia, the first floor contained the MVD offices, and in the basement there was a prison. There were no windows in the prison, and along the corridor were searchlights illuminating the whole area. The cells were not heated, and the floor was concrete. There were no beds in the cells, only rotten straw mattresses, and no blankets. The guards were MVD soldiers. The inmates of the cell source was put into were all Soviets imprisoned for criminal acts.

25X1A 1. Comment: The name Zilais Brinums, Blue Wonder, was common before the war; the name probably originates from the original blue color of the building.

25X1 Comment: As is customary in the Baltic area, source uses "NKVD" to indicate the security forces,

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